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AN
E S S A Y
ON THE
EDUCATION
OF
YOUNG LADIES.

ADDRESSED TO
A PERSON OF DISTINCTION.

Ah, Friend! to dazzle let the Vain design;
To RAISE the THOUGHT, and TOUCH the HEART be thine.
POPE.

LONDON:
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IF it should be alleged, that the Author of this Essay has recommended but a very small number of books to the perusal of young readers, he begs leave to observe, that he would, by no means, encourage them in a hasty transition from one thing to another; that half a dozen books of the most useful kind, repeatedly read with care and attention, till their contents are sufficiently impressed on the mind and memory, will be attended with more real advantage, than twenty volumes, run over with a



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thoughtless rapidity. The writer however intended only to suggest a few cursory remarks on the subject, or to exhibit the mere outlines of his plan. The minuter parts of it he leaves to be enlarged and completed by those, whose taste and judgement have been improved and confirmed by long experience and accurate observation.

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AN
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MADAM,

THE Education of young Ladies is a subject of the highest importance, as the pleasure and happiness of society are essentially concerned in the rectitude of their understandings.

In this age of refinement, no one, I am persuaded, will pretend, that young women of family and fortune should be

left in their native ignorance, unacquainted with every thing, but a few external or superficial accomplishments, the public amusements, and the mysteries of the toilet.

A young lady, whose mind is destitute of taste and science, is an object of pity. She is a cipher in company, and a prey to spleen and melancholy in retirement. As she has no notion of any rational pursuit, her thoughts are employed on the lowest and most trifling objects, on the various and capricious modes of dress, on schemes of pleasure, dissipation, or gallantry. Her reading extends no farther, than to plays or novels, which serve only to inflame her imagination; and stimulate her passions. If she happens to be married to a man of sense, her husband finds no entertainment in her conversation, and forms some other connection. The lady, as it is natural

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to imagine, follows his example. Their house is a scene of confusion, extravagance, and discord. Her children, in the mean time, are indulged in pampering their appetites, in idleness, in mischief, and all their capricious, perverse, and tyrannical humours. As they advance into life, they follow the example of their parents, till at last disgrace is entailed on their name, and distress on their posterity.

“ I am far,” says a judicious writer, “ from recommending any attempts to render women learned; yet surely it is necessary they should be raised above ignorance. Such a general tincture of the most useful sciences, as may serve to free the mind from vulgar prejudices, and give it a relish for the rational exercise of its powers, may very justly enter into the plan of female education. That sex may be taught to turn the course of their reflections

flections into a proper and advantageous channel, without any danger of rendering them too elevated for the feminine duties of life. In a word, I would have them considered, as designed by Providence for use, as well as shew, and trained up, not only as women, but as rational creatures *."

Admitting the propriety of these observations, there is only one alternative remaining: young ladies must be either sent to a SCHOOL, or educated at HOME.

I have seen, in many instances, the effects of these different methods of education; but, I think, the former infinitely preferable to the latter.

At a school, under prudent and judicious regulations, young ladies are accustomed to rise early, and live temperately, which

* Fitzosborne's Letters, xli.

are two circumstances of the highest importance. Every part of their time is usefully employed; and their abilities are properly exerted. At eight or nine years of age, they are taught to think, to reflect, and to study; exertions, which are absolutely necessary for the cultivation of a rational mind, and which can never be expected from those, whose youth has been spent in idleness or trifling amusements.

Ye tender-hearted parents, do not imagine, that study will hurt the eyes or the heads of your daughters. If you would wish them to become amiable, accomplished, and respectable women, use them to think, to apply, to study, in their early years; the sooner the better. The faculties of every creature are impaired by disuse, and strengthened by exercise.

If their education should be neglected, till they are twelve or thirteen years of

age, their thoughts will be engrossed by other objects. Every species of literature will be a new, strange, and disagreeable employment; and no instruction will make any impression on their minds.

At all respectable boarding-schools, especially in or near the metropolis, the young ladies are attended by eminent masters, and instructed in proportion to their stay, their fortune, and their future prospects, in every useful and ornamental part of polite education. In these pursuits their spirits are enlivened, and their emulation excited by their companions. They are improved, not only by the lessons, which they themselves receive; but by those, which they hear others repeat. In this manner, instruction is every moment resounding in their ears, and easily finds an access to their minds; because it comes obliquely and imperceptibly, without any previous thought or application.

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Their intercourse with one another lays the foundation of humane and benevolent affections ; and their dancing in a chaste, social, and elegant circle, gives them an ease and freedom in their carriage, by which they are enabled to appear in company, or, even at court, with grace and dignity.

ON the other hand, let us consider the means of improvement, which young ladies enjoy by a domestic education. If they are under the inspection of a discrete and sensible mother, or a governess, who has had a liberal education, and is a woman of taste and prudence, they may receive great advantages. But this is very seldom the case ; for the children of opulent parents are generally provided with a governess from France, or Switzerland, whose only qualifications are pertness and vanity,

a frippery appearance, and a volubility of tongue. With this lady they are generally shut up in a private apartment, where they are taught to read with a rapid and unintelligible mutter, or chatter a little barbarous French. Here they have no companions ; and not one spark of emulation is excited. Their solitude renders them torpid and inactive. Their mothers, their elder sisters, their aunts, their cousins, and the trifling females who visit in the family, are perpetually interrupting their studies, and dissipating their thoughts. Company is expected, or a visit is to be paid ; the hair-dresser, the dentist, the milliner, or the mantua-maker is to attend them at twelve ; or, which is a very common case, Miss Louisa or Miss Sophy has the headache, and every lesson must be postponed.

If they are excluded from company and visits, the consequence is equally detrimental.

mental. They become formal and reserved, and contract an awkward bashfulness in their behaviour. When pappa and mamma are absent, in pursuit of their pleasures, they contrive to elope from their governess, and are initiated into the ribaldry and impertinence of the kitchen, by the valet, the house-maid, and my lady's woman; and, in this manner, their education is completed!

HAVING sufficiently demonstrated the pernicious effects, which generally attend the domestic education of young ladies, under a governess from France or Switzerland, or an English lady of a slender capacity, with a few poor, superficial qualifications, I now proceed to consider the books, in which they are usually instructed. These are frequently some infantine dialogues, some familiar stories, some sacred dramas,

dramas, some collection of scraps and fragments in prose and verse, or some contemptible frippery, in various departments of literature, imported from Paris, or composed by those ladies and gentlemen, who come hither from that seminary of *liberty*, *religion*, and *politeness*, to rectify the understanding, and improve the morals of the rising generation.

Some of these publications abound in all the babbling of the nursery; others distract the mind by a rapid transition from one extract to another; and others are interspersed with representations of customs and manners, morality and religion, faith and devotion, which are utterly unfit for the instruction of an English woman, or a rational protestant.

But whatever may be the moral tendency of such books, they are mere trash and impertinence. They are not introductory

ductory to any science. They lay down no rational principles. They teach nothing, but a superficial way of thinking, and a volatile excursion from one subject to another. The principal thing to be expected from them, is amusement.

You will say, "children must be led on by something, that pleases the imagination, and engages their attention." I reply: Let them be amused on proper occasions. But the business of education is a serious pursuit; and when you attempt to divert them in the paths of science, consider what you are doing. You are sowing the seeds of idleness; you are leading them to suppose, that they are to do nothing, which is not conducive to their amusement; you are giving them a disrelish for every thing, which does not come under the form of pleasure, or is not recommended by what is called an agreeable variety. In short,

you are giving them a proportionable degree of levity, and a turn for trifling and dissipation.

When their taste is thus vitiated by such an injudicious course of reading, how will you teach them any of the sciences? how will you bring them to think, and to study? Every thing that requires application, that is, every valuable species of knowledge, will appear dry, insipid, tedious, and disgusting to their perverted inclinations; and most probably they will continue the same empty and insignificant creatures through life; without the least relish for books of any sort, but plays, novels, romances, and the literary trash of circulating libraries.

To tempt young people to read, and learn the first rudiments of literature, by these seductive methods, is as absurd, as it would be to teach them temperance by pampering their appetites, or a regular,
industrious

industrious life, by leading them through scenes of idleness, luxury, and extravagance.

It should be considered, that we are not sent into the world to spend our time in sports and amusements, or in the mere gratification of our passions; but in the performance of our respective duties, as christians, and as members of society; and, in our progress through life, we are probably destined to undergo difficulties and distresses of various kinds. But how are those triflers (who, in their infancy, have been used to imagine, that every thing must be subservient to their diversion) to be weaned from such a propensity? How, or when, are their thoughts to be turned from trivial pursuits to the practice of moral and religious duties? to a rigid œconomy, and a chearful resignation to the dispensations of Providence? As evil habits soon grow inveterate, it should be

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the supreme object of education to guard young persons against the meretricious allurements of pleasure ; to check the fallies of a fickle and volatile disposition ; to produce a serious frame of mind ; and to inspire them with the love of wisdom in her genuine simplicity.

The youth of the other sex are seldom tempted to study by pleasurable reading. They are compelled to learn the dry rudiments of Latin and Greek, the parts of speech, the declension of nouns, the conjugation of verbs, and the rules of syntax. When they have pursued this drudgery for some time, and have passed through the rugged avenues of science, their progress gradually becomes more easy, their prospect more delightful ; the classic writers soon begin to entertain them with the most enchanting scenery, and reward them with all the literary treasures of Greece and Rome.

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In this manner, if they are not their own enemies, they become scholars and philosophers; while those, who are educated like their sisters, are empty and insignificant coxcombs, dangles at a watering-place, fops at an opera, spendthrifts at a gaming-table, and fox-hunters in the country.

In opposition to the sentiments I have here suggested, you will probably reply, "that books of a more scientific kind are above the weak capacities of children."—I answer: good sense and rational instruction are as easily comprehended, as a gossiping dialogue, a trifling drama, or an idle story. But suppose, this were not the case, suppose they were initiated into a book, a little above their comprehension, they would receive a superior advantage. Their capacities would be enlarged, and their minds expanded, by proposing to them
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what at first may seem beyond their reach. It is the great business of a proper and liberal education, not to confine their thoughts to mean language and beggarly elements, but to open their minds, to enliven their imaginations, and to give them noble and extensive ideas.

By a little practice and experience, the young lady will be taught to exercise her faculties, to exert her powers on useful subjects, and to aspire after the most rational and sublime sciences.

It is upon this principle, that the Scriptures propose to our imitation, not an ordinary and familiar example, but a pattern of infinite perfection: "Be ye perfect, says the divine Author of christianity, as your Father, who is in heaven, is perfect." This is beyond the reach of human abilities; but it is wisely calculated to raise the aspiring soul to the highest elevation.

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WHEN children first begin to speak and to read, the generality of people seem to imagine, that they are incapable of forming any rational ideas, or comprehending any useful instruction. Under this persuasion, they are treated as a species of idiots, their views are turned upon the lowest and most trifling objects. The language, in which they are addressed, is a despicable jargon of broken English *. And some of the books, which are put into their hands, are written in a mean style, filled with foolish and contemptible stories, the very reverse of every thing, that can open their minds, or give them just and rational notions.

Nothing surely can be more absurd and pernicious, than a practice, which thus vitiates the taste, and gives the mind a false

* "Will pitty sing have a pitty pum," is the language of the nursery.

bias, at the commencement of its progress in learning. Parents and others, who have the care of children, should always consider, that good sense, in a correct and elegant style *, as I have already observed, is as easily understood and remembered as idle gibberish, or a ridiculous tale.

THOUGH many useful publications, for the benefit of young readers, have appeared within the last twenty years, it is difficult to specify any one in particular, which may be thought preferable to the rest. I shall however observe, that easy language, and delicacy of sentiment, are very properly calculated to allure and captivate a youthful imagination; and as children can scarcely

* By an elegant style, I do not mean a laboured pomp of expression, composed of splendid epithets and rhetorical flourishes; but an easy, natural, unaffected simplicity.

support their voice through five or six monosyllables, every sentence should be concise. By attempting to read a longer period than their feeble organs can command, they inevitably contract a drawling monotony. It is therefore extremely necessary to prevent this gross impropriety, and accustom them, from their early years, to a clear, natural, and graceful enunciation*.

WHEN they have been fully instructed in the proper modulation of their voice, on just and rational principles, they may be directed to read other books, containing any kind of pleasing and useful information, such as Percival's Moral Tales, &c.

* Two small volumes have been professedly written upon the plan here recommended, namely, *An Introduction to the Study of Polite Literature*, and *An Essay on Punctuation*, in which neatness and purity of style have been particularly regarded; printed for J. WALTER, Charing-cross.

This work is ingenious and entertaining, and properly calculated for young people.

The Adventures of Telemachus *, as exhibited in a translation published in 1795, may be warmly recommended. It is one of the most captivating and instructive books that can be put into the hands of young readers. It will charm their imagination, improve their taste, and inspire them with the love of wisdom and virtue.

There are many other agreeable publications, suited to the capacities of children, in their early years, which it would be too tedious to mention in this place. Prudent and sensible women, who have had long experience, in the conduct of their respective seminaries, will easily make a proper selection.

* In two volumes, 12mo. with notes, and the Life of the Author.

It must always be remembered, that young ladies should be carefully instructed, at proper intervals, in the principles of Christianity. For this purpose, let them read some SELECT parts of the New Testament; and some short, clear, and rational explanation of the church-catechism. But what treatise on this subject deserves the preference, I cannot easily determine. I do not know any, that exactly answers my ideas.

Gilpin's Lectures, in two volumes, form a respectable compendium of the principles and doctrines of the christian religion. They are written in a neat, familiar style. But to those, who love brevity, the author may perhaps be thought a little too diffuse on self-evident truths, and on points, wherein even learned men are not universally agreed.

Addison's Evidences of Christianity, though an imperfect work, will always derive a lustre from the character of the celebrated author. Yet they are not perfectly adapted to the comprehension of young readers. We still want a short, plain, satisfactory treatise on that subject.

On the common topics of morality, propriety of conduct, politeness, taste, and literature, we have a great variety of modern productions. Some of the papers in the Spectator, the Guardian, and other periodical publications, are excellent in this species of writing. That graceful manner, that becoming air, which Cicero * esteemed a criterion of fine composition, and which every reader, he says, imagines so easy to be imitated, yet will find so difficult to attain, is

* Cic. Orat. § 21. 23.

the prevailing characteristic of Mr. Addison's performances *. This admired writer,

Forms the soft bosom with the gentlest art,
And pours each human virtue on the heart †.

Though the name of reflections, or meditations, is not apt to convey a pleasing idea to the mind of a young and volatile female; yet any one, who possesses the least degree of taste and discernment, may read Sturm's Reflections on the Works of God ‡ with the greatest pleasure and improvement. They are pious without fanaticism; and give us a delightful view of those beautiful and magnificent objects, which are discernible in every part of the visible creation.

* Fitzosb. Let. xxix.

† Pope, Imit. of Hor. b. ii. Ep. i. 229.

‡ In 3 vols. 12mo.

AN intimate acquaintance with the history of England is indispensibly necessary for every native of this country, who wishes to acquire a liberal education. Hume's is a valuable work ; but it is too voluminous for children. It would only distract and oppress their memory. A small volume, containing the most interesting occurrences, from the invasion of the Romans, to the present time, if written with taste and judgement, will be better suited to their slender capacities, and serve as a proper introduction to more copious and elaborate compilations *.

Geography and chronology are closely connected with history ; and a small tincture of those sciences is extremely proper.

* A small volume, written in a plain style, is printed for Robinson and Co. price 2s. and is the best epitome I have seen.

I am not inclined to recommend either the Greek or the Roman history to the female scholar, before she has made a considerable progress in reading. A moderate knowledge of the antiquities, customs, laws, manners, and transactions of those people, requires a long and accurate investigation, which is far beyond the abilities of children.

A KNOWLEDGE of the French language is generally accounted a necessary part of female education. It is, I confess, a genteel, and, in many cases, a very proper accomplishment; but, I think, too much time is generally employed in this pursuit; especially by young women in common life. For what purpose is it to answer? Do these ladies intend to travel? Not one in a thousand has any such design. Do they wish to converse or correspond with the natives

natives of France? Alas, the advantage is not worth the trouble! Do they design to make the writers of that country their particular study? So much the worse. They will be in greater danger of having their imaginations inflamed, and their morals depraved, by the licentious novels, the extravagant romances, the loose essays, the philosophical reveries, and the political speculations of republican free-thinkers.

Our fair countrywomen ought to know, that we have English writers, in all departments of literature, more than sufficient to employ their leisure, and afford them a constant supply of rational entertainment.

I cannot, I confess, applaud that partiality for the French tongue, which so much prevails in this country. The intermixture of terms, expressions, and

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idioms, borrowed from thence *, and introduced into many of our modern publications, will have a tendency to corrupt the English language.

* Such as, à propos, à la mode, à la mort, à l'oreille, accoucheur, agrémens; bon mot, bon vivant, bon repos, bon ton, bonne bouche, beau, belle, beaux esprits, bel esprit, beau monde, belles lettres, billet-doux, baifemains, bagatelle, bouquet, badinage, bourgeois, brigands; chemise, coup d'œil, coup de main, coup d'éclat, chef d'œuvre, comme il faut, cul de sac, chevaux de frise, ci-devant; debonnaire, dégagé, dernier ressort, double entendre, dénouement, deshabillé, début, douceur; etiquette, éclat, encore, éclaircissement, environs, escorte, ennui, entre-nous, en famille, embonpoint; fête champêtre, feu de joie, fracas, femme de chambre, faux pas, fille de joie, fi donc, friseur; gaieté de cœur, gauche; jeu de main, jeu d'esprit; l'argent, le qui vive, là là; manoeuvre, mauvaise honte, mal-à-propos; nonchalance, naïveté; pressentiment, petit maître, penchant; reconnoître; sans cérémonie, sans façon, sans souci, sans doute, sans culotte, sang froid, sauf respect, savoir vivre, soi disant, suite; trait, tête-à-tête, tout ensemble; vignette, unique, vis-à-vis, valet de chambre; and a thousand other verbal emigrants, which we do not want.

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I have been frequently disgusted with the affectation of male and female travellers, superficial critics, and those frivolous geniuses usually styled *amateurs*, or *connoisseurs*, who are fond of using French phrases on almost every occasion. These coxcombs in literature are the silly imitators of the late Lord Chesterfield. If they were acquainted with the richness and energy of their native language, they would be sensible, that, in all cases, we can express our sentiments with more force and propriety in English, than in French, or perhaps in any other language; and that we have no occasion for any of these foreign auxiliaries. If one of these fops talks of a favorite lady, he tells us, that he is charmed with a *je ne sai quoi* in her air and aspect. If the French critic speaks of a beautiful passage in Virgil, he pretends to admire a *je ne sai quoi* in the language of the poet; and this

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is the utmost extent of his criticism. If the *amateur* hears a piece of exquisite music, he feels this wonderful *je ne sai quoi* in every note. And if the *connoisseur* sees a statue or a picture, he expatiates on the captivating *je ne sai quoi*.

This is the cant of all ignorant pretenders to taste and delicacy, and an excellent phrase for those, who can assign no reason for their opinion. The Frenchified *amateur* absolutely declares, that he has no idea of the grace and elegance, which he admires; that there is something in the lady, the poetical imagery, the music, the statue, or the picture, with which his fancy is enraptured; but that he does not know what it is; and that his judgement and imagination are totally perplexed and confounded.

Instead of this unmeaning jargon *,

* Vox, & præterea nihil.

this expression of stupidity, ignorance, and folly, a sensible man, if he speaks in general terms, will observe, that the music is exquisite; that the lady is extremely pleasing; that there is a certain ineffable charm, or an inexpressible grace and elegance in her air and aspect; that the passage is inimitably beautiful, &c.

There is a very material difference between saying, I do not *know* what I admire, and I am not able to *express* my sentiments. In the former case, the speaker proclaims his ignorance; in the latter, he tells us, that he has a competent idea of the subject, but that he only wants words to express the conceptions of a warm and lively imagination. This is a very common case. Lucretius, Seneca, Pliny*, and other ancient writers, confessed and lamented "the

* Lucret. l. i. ver. 140. Id. i. 832. Sen. Ep. lviii. Plin. Ep. l. iv. 18.

poverty of the Latin language." Juvenal speaks with infinitely more propriety than the French critic, when he says *,

"It is what I conceive, but cannot demonstrate."

AMONG all the books, which are intended for the use of young people, who have the happiness to receive a polite education, I know none more worthy of their constant study, and repeated perusal, than Lowth's Introduction to English Grammar. A competent knowledge of the principles of our own language, as the excellent author very justly observes, is "the true foundation, upon which all literature, properly so called, ought to be raised." Even in social life, propriety of language, in

* Nequeo monstrare, et sentio tantum. Juv. Sat. vii. 56.

In this, and a few other places, the author has taken the liberty to borrow from some of his own fugitive pieces, which he hopes will not be reckoned a plagiarism.

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speaking and writing, is an elegant accomplishment, a certain characteristic of good sense and good breeding. On the contrary, a violation of the common rules of grammar is a sure indication of a mean capacity, and a vulgar education.

Lowth's Grammar is supposed by some people to be too difficult for female students of ten or twelve years of age. But it is evident, that the judicious author was not of this opinion, when he styled it an **INTRODUCTION**; and observed, that "it was calculated for learners, even of the lowest class." To the ignorant and the idle, it may seem difficult; but what difficulty is there in the rules or the notes of this treatise, compared with the perplexities of a Latin, or a French grammar? We may venture to affirm, that every grammar, which is more easy and familiar, is, in the same degree, more superficial and insignificant.

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When they are tolerably well acquainted with the parts of speech, and the common rules of syntax, they should be frequently exercised in analyzing, or, as it is vulgarly called, parsing, some short, easy sentences. Without such an application of the rules, grammar is but an empty name, of no use or advantage.

NOTWITHSTANDING the observation of an ingenious writer, which I have already cited *, I have sometimes been surpris'd, that, among the various branches of education, in which young ladies of fortune are usually instructed, the Latin language has never been made an object of their study. There are many advantages attending it, which would render it a very desirable acquisition. We can scarcely take

* Melmoth, Fitzosb. Let. xli.

up a book on any subject, in which we do not meet with Latin phrases, or quotations from the classics. This language is the storehouse of the learned, and contains an inexhaustible fund of information and knowledge. There is moreover a charm in the writings of Virgil, Horace, Ovid, and other Roman poets, infinitely superior to any thing, that we find in either French or Italian. At the court of Henry the Eighth, a knowledge of the learned languages was accounted a fashionable accomplishment. Queen Mary *, queen Elizabeth †, lady Jane Grey, Ann countess of Pembroke ‡, and many other ladies

* *Scripsit bene Latinas epistolas.* Erasmi. l. xix. ep. 31.

† The Latin and the Greek were almost as familiar to the princess Elizabeth and lady Jane, as English. When the celebrated Roger Ascham went to visit the latter in Leicestershire, he found her reading Plato's *Phædon* in Greek. Biog. Brit. art. Ascham.

‡ Ibid. vol. i. p. 215. edit. 1747.

of distinction, were able to write and speak Latin with great fluency.

As young ladies, when they extend their inquiries beyond their first rudiments, will certainly read the works of some of our poets, it will be very proper, that their taste should not be depraved by the effusions of modern scribblers. Let them not mistake a profusion of splendid epithets, and an affected pomp of words, for elegance of composition, and sublimity of sentiment. The first poetical book, which, I suppose, they will read at school, is Gay's Fables; to which, I think, no reasonable objection can be made. The sentiments are lively, the versification smooth, and the moral instructions, which they contain, are, in general, obvious and important.

Thomson's Seasons will give them a just and pleasing description of nature.

Milton's *Paradise Lost* must not be neglected. This poem abounds with an astonishing variety of sublime conceptions. The poet carries his reader into scenes, which had never been described, or even conceived, by any former writer. Yet he often sinks into mere prose, and a vulgar diction *. Mr. Pope has very properly characterized the poetical merit of this work in the following lines :

“ Milton's strong pinion now not heav'n can bound :
 Now serpent-like, in prose, he sweeps the ground.
 In quibbles angel and archangel join ;
 And God the Father turns a school-divine †.”

Thomson's *Seasons*, or *Paradise Lost*, will accustom young readers to blank verse. Those, who wish to refine their taste by the

* The reader will find a sufficient confirmation of this remark in a speech, supposed to be made by the Almighty, b. x. ver. 616—640.

“ See with what heat these dogs of hell advance,” &c.

† Pope's *Imit. of Hor.* b. ii. ep. i.

most elegant compositions, must study the poetical works of Mr. Pope. His Pastorals, his Essay on Criticism, his Essay on Man, and other pieces, are exquisitely beautiful.

Homer's Iliad is justly accounted the noblest effort of genius, which the world has ever produced; and, I think, we may venture to assert, that Mr. Pope's translation of it is infinitely superior to any work of the same kind, in any language.

The translation of the Odyssey, though part of it only was written by Mr. Pope *, is likewise an admirable performance. This poem exhibits the finest lessons of morality, the most entertaining variety of scenes and events, the most natural and lively pictures of civil and domestic life, the most authen-

* Mr. Broome translated eight books, namely, the 2. 6. 8. 11. 12. 16. 18. 23. Mr. Fenton, the 1. 4. 19. 20. Mr. Pope, the other twelve.

tic representations of the manners and customs of antiquity, and the most regular pattern of a legitimate epopea. It is therefore peculiarly useful to those, who are animated by the noble ambition of adorning humanity, by their virtuous lives, or their ingenious productions *.

The *Odyssey* gives us a character, which highly deserves the attention of every female reader.

Penelope, a principal personage in the poem, was the wife of Ulysses, king of Ithaca. During the absence of her husband, which continued twenty years, she could not be prevailed upon to violate the promises of constancy, which she had given him at his departure, though it was often reported, that he was dead, and she was continually solicited by many noble suitors.

* Advent. N^o 83.

As she could not dismiss them by force, she used several ingenious artifices to evade their importunities, till Ulysses returned. Her prudence, her benevolence of heart, her tenderness and affection for her husband and her son, appear on every occasion, and render her an amiable and exemplary pattern of domestic virtue, and conjugal fidelity.

It is sometimes expected, that young people at school should be occasionally employed in writing themes. This, says Mr. Locke *, is a sort of Ægyptian tyranny; it is an order to work without materials; to say something, when they know nothing; to enter into a train of reflections, before they have made any observations.—To employ them in such exercises is, in

* Locke, on Education, § 171.

his opinion, "as foolish, as to set a blind man to talk of colours, or a deaf man of music."

Letter-writing however is an important part of education, and requires particular attention. A young lady discovers her sentiments, her taste, her understanding, her knowledge, in her letters; and consequently, whenever she writes, she exposes her picture to the world.

If this be the case, you will probably ask, in what the epistolary style, or the style of a letter properly consists. I answer: the language should be strictly grammatical; but, at the same time, easy, familiar, and agreeable. All appearance of labour and study, all pomp and affectation, should be carefully avoided. The writer should express the sentiments and feelings of the heart with a natural simplicity, and an artless freedom. A polite and senti-

mental

mental correspondence should be enlivened with agreeable strokes of imagination, sprightliness, and good humour. When business is the subject, all rhetorical flourishes are improper. Plain language, and brevity in particular, should be strictly observed. But no low or vulgar phrases should ever be admitted.

It may be expected, that I should say something of writing, arithmetic, dancing, drawing, and music. But I shall only observe, that, three of these articles are indispensable qualifications; and, with respect to drawing and music, I do not wish to have them excluded from polite life: far from it. But when I see the daughters of common people, trifling with their pencils, or perpetually grating the ears of their friends and neighbours by their vocal or instrumental music, I cannot but consider
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the pursuit, as a ridiculous misapplication of that time, which would be much more profitably and laudably employed in learning their domestic duties. Human life is too short, and too valuable, to be thrown away on an idle, or an inflammatory sonnet,

THIS naturally brings me to take notice of an amusement, which often engages the attention of young ladies in their retirement. The generality of gay, sprightly females are fond of reading novels; and some parents indulge them in it, under an idea, that it is innocent, and gives them a knowledge of the world; but let them beware of such books, without a proper discrimination. Of all reading, that of novels is the most futile, and frequently the most pernicious. Many of them suggest false notions of life, inflame the imagination, and vitiate the heart. A lady,
whose

whose mind is not engaged in more useful, or capable of more rational, employment, sends her servant to the Circulating Library; and he returns loaded with volumes, containing pathetic tales of love and madness, the sorrows of a disappointed innamorato *, or the adventures of a debauchee; which fill her head with ridiculous chimeras, with romantic schemes of gallantry, with an admiration of young rakes of spirit; with dreams of conquests, amorous interviews, and matrimonial excursions; with a detestation of all prudential advice, impatience of controul, love of imaginary liberty, and an abjuration of all parental authority. In many of our novels, such infatuating and inflammatory notions are excited, such scenes of villany and vice are laid open, as should never be communi-

* The Sorrows of Werter, and the like detestable trash!

cated to the female mind. The criminal projects of a romantic hero are usually placed in the most agreeable light. His arts of seduction, his flattery, his insinuating address, his personal accomplishments, his gallantry and gaiety, and his enterprising spirit, are set off to the highest advantage. By these means, vice generally becomes familiar, and no longer excites that horror and detestation, which it ought to create.

A young woman, who employs her time in reading novels, will never find amusement in any other books. Her mind will be soon debauched by licentious descriptions, and lascivious images; and she will consequently remain the same insignificant creature through life; her mind will become a magazine of trifles and follies, or rather impure and wanton ideas. Her favourite novels will never teach her the social virtues, the qualifications of domestic life,

life, the principles of her native language, history, geography, morality, the precepts of christianity, or any other useful science. For, many of those compositions, which are thrown out upon the world by idle scribblers, silly women, or impertinent coxcombs in literature, are crude and hasty effusions, written in mean and vulgar language, or with an affected pomp of expression; and abound with characters, images, and sentiments of levity and licentiousness.

I do not however pretend to assert, that all novels are equally despicable. The severest critic must allow, that there are several productions of this kind, not unworthy of their perusal. I should think a person destitute of taste, who should dislike the works of some ingenious writers in this species of literature. But, it is necessary to make a proper distinction between the works of real genius, and the trifling contents

tents of a Circulating Library; between Gil Blas and an insipid tale of love and gallantry; between the memoirs of an illustrious patriot, or an eminent writer, and those of a fortune-hunter, or a lady of pleasure. I have received, I confess, much real pleasure and information, from the writings of Fielding, and even from Pompey the Little; but I should think myself excessively idle, were I to devote a considerable part of my time to an amusement of this kind. I would seldom take up a novel, but at a time, when I had either no opportunity to pursue more instructive and useful studies, or after I had fatigued myself with business of importance. At such intervals, a great man, or an ingenious lady, may be allowed to trifle; for even this engagement is infinitely better than idleness, and a total vacuity of thought. “I pity,” says the celebrated lord Falkland, “an unlearned gentleman

gentleman in a rainy day." Nothing certainly can be more despicable than the sight of an empty head, gazing out at a window for amusement in the street. To such a genius I would recommend some innocent novel, rather than the sacrifice of several hours to the mere gratification of the eye, or a contemptible LOUNGE.

BEFORE I conclude, there is another point, on which I shall take the liberty to make some short observations.

It is, I believe, the object of every lady's ambition to appear beautiful. But every one is not endowed with this attractive charm; and when she has not been favoured with it, she has generally recourse to the mysteries of the toilet. But this is a deceitful expedient, and frequently destroys that beauty, which she wishes to improve. There is a more laudable and successful

cessful method of acquiring those graces, which are the objects of her ardent desire. I mean the cultivation of habitual good humour. This amiable quality throws an agreeable lustre over the air and aspect; it diffuses an unspeakable sweetness through every feature, and beams in the eye with mildness and benignity; it displays an openness and candour, which are productive of esteem and affection, or, as we may express it in poetical language,

This mental beam dilates the heart,

And sparkles in the face;

It harmonizes ev'ry thought,

And heightens ev'ry grace.

On the contrary, moroseness, or ill-humour, casts a gloom over the countenance, and defaces all the beauties of nature. Every irregular and malignant passion has this pernicious effect. Pride,
anger,

anger, malevolence, jealousy, and inhumanity, when pictured on the countenance, will convert the aspect of a beautiful woman into that of a termagant or a fury. . .

As the passions have this powerful influence on the outward appearance, the most valuable, the most endearing accomplishment, which any young lady can acquire, is a mild and benevolent disposition. This is the parent of love and friendship; this will continue an ineffable charm, when the brilliancy and vivacity of youth are vanished; this, we believe on Christian principles, will be the unfading ornament of the soul in the mansions of glory.

I am, &c.

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